

Body Condition Scoring Goats to Improve Management

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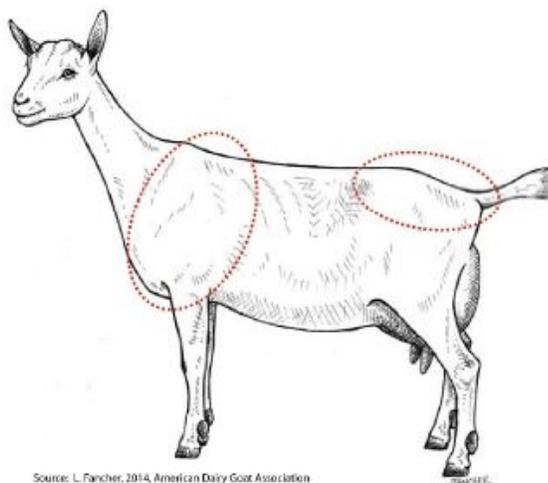
Multi-County Livestock, Agent I

Pasco, Sumter, and Hernando Counties

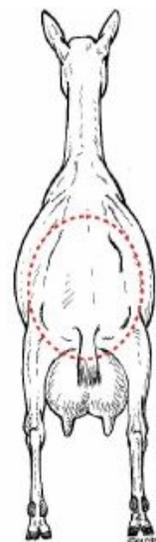
One of the costliest expenses in animal production is the feeding/nutrition program. The direct measurement of a successful feeding program is body condition score (BCS). This is a reflection of past nutritional management and a preview of reproductive performance in the future. By scoring goats on a regular basis, managers can make necessary adjustments before performance, health, and perhaps welfare of the animal are affected. In a general, BCS is an estimate of available fat reserves which the animal can use during times of high energy demand due to stress, high performance or less than optimal nutrition.

Where to look for body condition?

There are 3 areas that should be both visually evaluated and palpated to confirm body condition on a goat. Area 1: Side view of the shoulder region (neck, brisket, point of shoulder). Area 2: Top view of the back (loin, rump, hips, and pins). Area 3: Tail and tailhead.



BCS Sites: Side View



BCS Site: Top View

What is the body condition score scale?

The most common scoring scale uses a 5-point classification and is described in the chart.

| Score | Spinous process | Rib Cage | Loin eye |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|
| BCS 1 Very thin | Easy to see and feel, sharp | Easy to feel and can feel under | No fat covering |
| BCS 2 Thin | Easy to feel, but smooth | Smooth, slightly rounded, need to use slight pressure to feel | Smooth, even fat cover |
| BCS 3 Good Condition | Smooth and rounded | Smooth, even feel | Smooth, even fat cover |
| BCS 4 Fat | Can feel with firm pressure, no points can be felt | Individual ribs can not be felt, but can still feel indent between ribs | Thick fat |
| BCS 5 Obese | Smooth, no individual vertebra can be felt | Individual ribs can not be felt. No separation of ribs felt | Thick fat covering, may be lumpy and "jiggly" |

Source: Penn State University Extension; <https://extension.psu.edu/courses/meat-goat/reproduction/body-condition-scoring/body-condition-scoring-table>

What do these scores mean for production?

Does that are too thin throughout gestation (less than 2) will have lower milk production and likely have reproductive issues during the next breeding season. A doe that is over-conditioned (over 4) can suffer from pregnancy toxemia and could have difficulty kidding. The target BCS would be between 2.5 and 3.5 due to fluctuations due to lactation level, stage of pregnancy, etc. Whether you are raising dairy goats or meat goats, lactation and reproductive performance is important to both. The objective of any goat producer is to keep the herd in optimal condition and make adjustments to management as you observe changes.



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